



AI Guardrails for GTM Teams

With Peter Mullen, CMO, Kore.ai + Raksha Koneru, VP of GTM Strategy, Kore.ai

Episode Transcript

[00:00:00] **Catherine:** Welcome to the CMO Catalyst Lab. I'm your host, Catherine, and this is my co-host, Scott. Today, we're talking to Peter Mullen, the CMO at Kore.ai, and his VP of Go-To-Market Strategy, Raksha Koneru. Even as an AI native company, Kore.ai is having to move like a scrappy startup, figuring out how to move fast with AI while ensuring brand and sales integrity.

[00:00:28] **Catherine:** Peter and Raksha, welcome to the show. We're glad to have you. Awesome. Thank you. Glad to be here. Thank you. So AI is moving really fast, and even the biggest companies are having to act like scrappy startups again. What's that actually been like for you?

[00:00:43] **Peter:** I, you know, I'll, I'll take that, and it's great to be here, Scott, Catherine, thank you so much.

[00:00:48] **Peter:** What a time. We're filming or recording this in the second quarter of 2026, and everything has changed since late 2022 when Sam Altman announced something and the world began to change with OpenAI, ChatGPT, with then Claude, with Gemini, with everything else. This is what it is like on the ground from a strategic standpoint as well as an operational standpoint.

[00:01:11] **Peter:** Kore.ai is a company that has been around for about a dozen years. It's the leader in conversational AI for customer support. That's where we made our name. That's where we built our reputation, and we, we have done a phenomenal job in that. But guess what? Everything changed starting several years ago, and all of us know this.

[00:01:29] **Raksha:** Yeah, I mean, I think we're in an industry right now, right, where every company is kind of going through the scrappy startup phase, whether you've been in the business for, you know, two, three years versus, you know, 10, 15 years, right? And it does come back to what Peter said, you know, when Sam Altman released, you know, LLMs and OpenAI.

[00:01:51] **Raksha:** That is really what changed everything, right? We are not the same company that we were, let's say, five years ago, right? We were a conversational AI company. Now that word has kind of gone to the side, right? Now everything is about agentic AI. Mm-hmm. It's not about being scrappy, it's about being adaptable to change, right?

[00:02:14] **Raksha:** And I think that's really exciting because you're problem-solving all the time, and in this industry, you have to expect that, for sure. Yeah. And, and everybody's facing that challenge. Mm-hmm. Everybody's facing that challenge, so this

[00:02:30] **Raksha:** is a great, uh, topic to jump into. Yeah. And I think another thing is, you know, especially in AI, R&D is always gonna be a thing. You know, you're not gonna be the same that you were a year ago. We've probably changed our product. I wouldn't changed, but optimized our product, right? Um- Mm.. Six times in the past year, right?

[00:02:46] **Raksha:** So that comes with, okay, how do we actually bring that change down to the rest of the company, whether it's sales, whether it is, you know, marketing, customer success, customer support, releasing new features to our existing customers. And that's really where it starts, like what outcomes do we want, and then kind of working backwards from there.

[00:03:08] **Catherine:** Yeah, I think that's key, and honestly, all of- Say the elephant in the room, it's a little bit of a scary time for a lot of marketers. So I'm really glad, Raksha, that you and Peter are kind of speaking to the reality that, hey, we're not alone, and there are other people dealing with these same challenges.

[00:03:24] **Catherine:** So I'd love to double-click on that a little bit with you. You know, Peter, you've spent 20-plus years building marketing playbooks that have worked. You've done it at Netflix, at PayActive. What is one thing that you're quietly proud of that you'd say AI has made completely irrelevant?

[00:03:39] **Peter:** Yeah, it's such a great question because I think if we're honest, uh, there's a lot of things that were phenomenal for all of us, Catherine, you, me, Scott, 15 years ago that don't matter today. Um, I would say from a marketing perspective, linear buying journeys is something

that we should not count on anymore. I would say more recently than 15 years ago, you know, the whole mandate that we are following an ABM flow to put people into the pipeline, to have them get excited, move from nurture, from awareness into curiosity, into engagement, and then we're gonna close and everyone lives happily ever after.

[00:04:16] **Peter:** That's gone, right? And even how we attract those people, um, and what we used to do, that's gone. So I am incredibly proud years ago of the digital systems that I, built up. Most of those digital systems and those schematics and those great wins that I used to have are now in a file system and will not be used again.

[00:04:37] **Peter:** We are now looking at- journeys that look more like squiggly lines. We are looking, uh, at recursive journeys for a buyer, I'm specifically talking about. We're looking at how do I, go from gated content where a CEO cared about the numbers at the end of the month or quarter to all ungated content, so we can have AEO, GEO, uh, and you know, even SCO 2026 capturing it.

[00:05:02] **Peter:** Um, so that is a big change in the macro, in the level, you know, in the operational level, Catherine, there is a ton of work that I'm thinking about and doing today that is revolving around empow- empowerment of the humans. So- Yeah.. Human in the loop is a very common phrase these days. It's time, yeah.

[00:05:23] **Peter:** Um, at my last company, we tried to trademark it because we had been using it for about a decade. So, so that was.. This is a very natural part of the conversation for me. We have got to empower the teams that we're working with. There is absolutely no question in my mind that a new intern coming into one of my offices in India is going to have a phenomenal idea, and he or she now has the opportunity to tell that idea to us, and we can start learning from each other.

[00:05:53] **Scott:** Five, 10 years ago, I would not be thinking that way. I would be thinking more from a hierarchy standpoint. Mm-hmm. And, and that's all part of where we are today and, and the opportunity in front of us. Maybe if we go a little, uh, just to look at a particular challenge, uh, that, that, you maybe you, uh, pinpointed and then said, "Okay, let's, let's take a look at this from a new perspective, from, uh, from a, from an AI, uh, solution-oriented perspective."

[00:06:22] **Scott:** How did you engage Peter on, what did you identify? And then Raksha, where did you step in and say, "Hey, let's peel back the onion"?

[00:06:30] **Peter:** Well, it, the, I'm gonna frame it with our culture and what we think about at KORE, 'cause it, this is really relevant. We are a leading AI company, and as we started talking, uh, we made our name in conversational AI.

[00:06:43] **Peter:** We then moved in several different iterations and evolutions toward AI applications.

[00:06:49] **Raksha:** Yeah, I think, you know, taking a step back, right? And going back to what Peter said about a linear buying journey, it's not like that anymore. It's a ton of squiggly lines. You have to do your research. You have to understand your customer, and it becomes more so in a case of consultative sales, right?

[00:07:11] **Raksha:** You're not selling a widget, you're selling a platform, and that's, that's what we do, right? We sell a platform that can be your AI operational strategy for your entire company, pretty much. So the way our sellers have to operate, is know the prospect, understand their challenges. How do we get to the economic buyer?

[00:07:32] **Raksha:** So it's a lot of strategic thinking and problem-solving that our sellers have to do, but it always starts with understanding your prospect and understanding the room you're gonna walk into. And getting into the solutions that we were solving for, right? To kind of solve that, solve that problem is we wanted to create this account research agent, right?

[00:07:54] **Raksha:** Where, our sellers don't have to spend, you know, hours and hours, days and days to figure out what their story is that they're gonna come in to an, an initial qualifying meeting or maybe even, you know, later on in the sales pipeline. So how do we condense that time, and how do we provide them the information upfront through AI?

[00:08:16] **Raksha:** That idea came about, right? And obviously, Peter was involved in it, our CEO was involved in it, because it is a huge thing and it's very important for us to kind of put that together to move efficiently and, um, fast, and kind of scale, right? My concern was mainly about the guardrails and presenting the right information, and I think that's what a lot of operators right now, face.

[00:08:40] **Raksha:** Because all ideas are really, really good as long as your data is good, and how do you get your data- Mm-hmm.. To be good enough for this agent to be effective and for people to adopt it?

[00:08:52] **Scott:** So you're talking sales efficiency, but you're also mainly talking about, okay, where's the governance there? Exactly. 'cause they have so much power, they just gather and use as opposed to Having it down a more straight path And we're- Peter, you're laughing. There must be- I- There must be, there must be an anecdote here somewhere or an example Uh, you know what?

[00:09:12] **Peter:** I, I love that when we start using phrases like this, marketers all start to look at each other and we all start nodding, right?

[00:09:18] **Peter:** This empowerment that is occurring is phenomenal. It is awesome. But you, will hear me often talk about my, my favorite phrase is the tumult and the opportunity that is in front of us. It is an incredible opportunity. It is a crazy moment. So yeah, Scott, We have the ability now for our incredible sales team around the world to use tools we have bought to, or excuse me, that we have built to develop their own decks, to decide what do they want to present tomorrow to a Fortune 500 company.

[00:09:54] **Peter:** And they can press a button and they can deliver some pretty good work, but they can also go a little bit sideways. And we are marketers, so we know that we like to have an element of control. We have built, uh, whether it's in Seismic or Highspot or something else, we have built a very strong, library that we're proud of, what should be said, how we say it, what is the cadence.

[00:10:14] **Peter:** Part of what has changed is that we've got to loosen up our grip on a lot of these things. However, you still have to have that human in the loop to come back and make sure what is being produced- Absolutely. Yeah.. To Raksha's point, is credible. Uh, if we go out and have one of our tools scrape the internet, are we getting the right information?

[00:10:32] **Peter:** Are we getting it off of Reddit with some disgruntled ex-employee, and then that becomes part of a deck that is being presented to a Fortune 500 company? Small but critical, right? All of this stuff is where we, the company, Kore lives from a business perspective, but for marketing, we live, every hour of the day because we have it on an exponential level.

[00:10:54] **Peter:** Uh, you know, I, I guess that's the point and that, that's why I was laughing, 'cause I think all of us are probably, as marketers, facing sellers around the world saying, "Hey guys, we got these tools. We're gonna run with this. We got it." And all the marketers are saying, "Yeah, we're excited you got it, but slow down.

[00:11:07] **Peter:** Let, let's make sure we're all coordinated."

[00:11:08] **Scott:** Yeah, it's tough to have a strategy if it's very wide, right? 'Cause then how do you measure?

[00:11:13] **Raksha:** I also feel like we're in kind of a unique situation, right? Because we're not a company where we sell, you know, a vertical solution, right? Like financial services AI, right?

[00:11:26] **Raksha:** Or healthcare. Mm-hmm. We're kind of a com- we're, we're a company where we cater to all of these different verticals, so there's a lot for our sellers to remember, right? And there's new information coming in every single day, whether it's a new case study for a new use case that we solved with this Fortune 500 company.

[00:11:47] **Raksha:** So I think also at the pace that we're going and how many problems we can solve, it's super important to maintain this type of technology and solutions that you're releasing to your sales team, whether it is a presentation builder, an account research report, and so on

[00:12:06] **Peter:** Oh, you know, Raksha, I'll, I'll jump on top of that.

[00:12:08] **Peter:** This is relevant. This is something I'm gonna be doing later today after this podcast. We have created, in my opinion, so much tier one, top level content for training and enabling our sales team that when I was looking at it, I observed just in the past couple weeks, that there's a great imbalance.

[00:12:27] **Peter:** The imbalance is that our content bolus, our libraries, is phenomenal. What we have neglected in recent quarters is that human touch, and is making sure- Mm.. That, our folks are following some protocols. We're loosening the protocols up about how we behave, how we move into the marketplace. But we're, we're..

[00:12:45] **Peter:** Literally, right before this call, I was talking to my boss, uh, our chief commercial officer, and saying, "Hey, how do we reestablish, call it the second half of the year structures?" For exactly what Raksha just said. How, how do we, take our content, now marry it to the cadences that we need to have for our sellers, many of whom have been in the industry for years and years, right?

[00:13:06] **Peter:** So they have their playbooks that have worked up till now. How do we make sure that th- that, that incredible word, how do we make sure we're empowering them, rather than saying, "Hey guys, we're doing it differently"? I, I will guarantee you, this is taking new sets of skills. It's things that we learned- Yeah

[00:13:21] **Peter:** when we were in kindergarten. You remember the book? Um, all of this is super cool, but it doesn't happen by itself. This requires a ton of thoughtfulness. Super tactical, Raksha's team, over the last couple weeks, has observed that there are multiple prospect lists inside of our company. Now, three or four or five years ago, you guys know this, we would not have had multiple prospect lists, because there was only one source of truth how we made those lists.

[00:13:49] Peter: Today, anybody can go out and capture. You can ZoomInfo yourself just by using one of your own personal AI tools with a glass of wine in the evening. You can get your own list. And this is actually a real problem, because this empowerment is leading to the fracturing, the lack of governance, the lack of control.

[00:14:05] Peter: We wanna bring it back in. We wanna keep- Yep.. People empowered. All of us are trying to figure this out.

[00:14:10] Catherine: I love that.

[00:14:10] Raksha: And I think that kind of goes into, like, silos, right? Because you have all of these- Mm.. Tools ready av- readily available to you, the biggest risk is kind of working in a silo. So with the prospect lists, right?

[00:14:25] Raksha: Sales has one, customer success has one, marketing has one. But nobody is aligned to, like, a singular well-oiled machine goal. So that's the problem we're solving right now. And it really is because of what Peter said, the people's ability to just go out and use whatever tool they have to scrape whatever website they want or whatever other tool they want to, figure out how they can make themselves successful.

[00:14:55] Raksha: But how do you actually bring it back in and make the, the machine well-oiled? 100%.

[00:15:00] Catherine: This is an incredible topic, and I wanna keep it going, and I wanna make sure that we do a quick word from our sponsor. Before I do that, though, the word that I would leave us to be thinking about is judgment.

[00:15:11] Catherine: In the world of AI, that's the piece that really the human loop, I think, brings, it forward is, that judgment piece You're hearing what alignment sounds like, but most GTM teams aren't on the same page.

[00:15:25] Catherine: The culprit? Fragmented and incomplete data, too many tools, and disjointed workflows. HG Insights changes that. Trusted by 95% of the Fortune Tech 500, HG Insights delivers AI-powered revenue growth intelligence solutions that help B2B companies accelerate their GTM strategy and execution. Through a unified platform, data fabric, AI co-pilots, and agents, HG empowers everyone to target the right accounts and buyers, engage at the right moment, and convert.

[00:16:02] Catherine: From ABM and predictive scoring to smart contact enrichment and personalization, HG Insights fuels your tech stack to turn contextual intelligence into pipeline. Your best opportunities are already in the data. See what precision GTM can do for you. Request a demo at hginights.com.

[00:16:23] Catherine: All right, so I know we had a chance to start talking about guardrails, and when we're doing guardrails and we're thinking about, "Okay, I'm a CMO.

[00:16:33] Catherine: Help me figure out how to actually put in these guardrails," especially if I might have a really customized audience and this might get really challenging, or I have a lot of verticals to consider. So Peter, Raksha, tell me about how you kind of thought through the options that were in front of you and how you set up those guardrails.

[00:16:52] Peter: Yeah, Ra- Raksha, let me start with this. Uh, a moment ago, you made this very funny, motion with your hands and you said, "Now the journey is squiggly lines." A- and this is actually true, but let's, let's define what squiggly means in this case. The first podcast in history to define squiggly, guys.

[00:17:08] Peter: Uh, what a moment. Squiggly means that there is no longer a linear journey. The ABM motion still has value directionally, account based marketing, but the journey has moved in different ways. But what it also means, and this is a second layer that we as marketers all have to consider, is that enterprise is coming with a different set of demands.

[00:17:31] Peter: And now this is very basic and I'm speaking in simple language. We sell to Fortune 500, we sell to Global 2000. You know most of the brands. They come Smart, intelligent, knowing what they need to solve for. They come, in many cases, having listened to podcasts, having listened to other competitors, with great ideas and imagination of what they wanna do.

[00:17:53] Peter: So part of the interesting challenge as marketers today is to have engagement with our sales leaders, where they will say- Mm-hmm.. "I've had an amazing set of conversations over the last several months with company XYZ. Here's what they want to do." Kore provides a platform that solves a lot of the harnessing and a lot of the buying, or excuse me, building, managing, deploying, optimizing your AI.

[00:18:16] Peter: We have AI that helps AI. We have AI that can help with your legacy systems. We can connect hundreds of systems all together. As a result, we have buyers who make what is now a reasonable re- set of requests. Give us something we haven't seen before, and the sellers- Mm-hmm.. Our sellers, will come back and say, "Guys, let's make this happen."

[00:18:38] Peter: Now, all of this is really good, but now we gotta get into operationally, what does that really mean? And Raksha, I'll, I'll let you- Yeah.. Take that over because while we have excitement, and I share that excitement of new things we can build, we've gotta have governance, we've gotta have control about how then we close the deal where everybody wins.

[00:18:56] Scott: Yeah, what did, Raksha, what did you try and then what did you hone in on? What was, what was some of the magic moments that, yeah, this is working?

[00:19:03] Raksha: Yeah, so I think going ba- back, based off of, like, Peter's point, that's obviously customer facing, right? And we have a very robust platform that, you know, you govern with AI, you optimize with AI, you build with AI.

[00:19:19] Raksha: We're in a very big shift right now as a company, Kore in particular, in which we are, we have released a platform where you can actually build with AI. AI optimizes AI. AI analyzes AI. So, n- it's getting easier with the R&D that we're doing to be ab- to, have the ability to customize solutions to the, the customer's request.

[00:19:47] Raksha: Previously, we had a platform that can do all of this. There's just a lot of manual effort, right, with our delivery teams. And it's because of all of the customization our customers come to us with, right? Because of the way that we market our platform, what we've done with all of our other customers, um, and so on and so forth.

[00:20:08] Raksha: But it's getting easier because we, we have released a platform that's, that's us, investing a lot in R&D in our company. But internally, when it comes to building out solutions, we have a very forward-thinking leadership team, right? Obviously, they're leaders in the AI industry, so their number one thing is how do we optimize processes with AI, and operations team, you go figure out how to do it, right?

[00:20:37] Raksha: Which is awesome, because honestly, it's really great to work in a company where I can use my own company's solution to figure out how to actually do this, right? But it does- Yeah.. Come to exactly what they want. They think of every little thing, right? We put this presentation skill together. We create a master template.

[00:21:00] Raksha: I go through the master template with our, with our C-level leadership, and they're pinpointing little things everywhere, right? Oh, this ROI slide, doesn't look right. You have to make the skill do it this way. It needs to look like this. It needs to bring in this information from this source that we don't have connected yet.

[00:21:20] Raksha: I think there is level setting with my leadership team, right? And understanding what the biggest priorities for the companies are, right? Because there is gonna be work that has to be put into it regardless. There's no way to kind of go around it. I think now with our new platform, the work becomes easier.

[00:21:40] Raksha: But really sitting down with them, understanding what the biggest priorities are for them from a company strategy point of view, and then focusing on those tasks that contribute to those, initiatives, right? And then kind of prioritizing- Yeah, yeah.. Your time after that. But customizing, I don't, think we're gonna get around that.

[00:22:01] Raksha: I think we have to actually have technology that makes it easier for us to build custom solutions, right? That's where the market is going. Five years ago, before OpenAI came out with ChatGPT and the LLM wave blew up- It was different. It was, it was very, very different. People were looking for point solutions.

[00:22:24] Raksha: They were looking for things that would match this use case that they're seeing broadly in the industry too. Everybody already bought their solutions five years ago, right? What's next- Mm-hmm.. Is, is what people are looking for right now.

[00:22:39] Scott: approach to work with, the particular, uh, leader or manager, how do you go about that?

[00:22:47] Scott: What are some of the, some of the questions you might ask? And how also are you doing, QA and iteration, uh, to get to that next level to say, "Hey, this skill is now good enough- Yeah.. To launch, and we can move on to the next skill," and how these all stream, uh, connect together for, to produce a, uh, more efficient work stream.

[00:23:10] Scott: How did you go about doing that?

[00:23:12] Raksha: What really matters is adoption, right? Once you actually release- Mm-hmm.. A solution, are people using it, right? Are they finding value out of it? This is for internal and external, right? That's the one thing with our customers that we need to make sure happens, right? 'Cause what do we sell?

[00:23:28] Raksha: We sell ROI. We sell outcomes. Same exact thing for the sellers that I support, for all of the marketers that I support, and everybody in the organization, right? If I build out a solution for you, and you're not adopting it, and it's technically ev- right, and it's working, why aren't you adopting it? What would actually make you use something like this?

[00:23:53] Raksha: That's what QA testing in my head is, right? It's not necessarily about something technically working. We always figure it out. It's about how can I optimize it better to where it's actually useful for you.

[00:24:06] Peter: Uh, you know, one of the ne- in- interesting things about this, uh, is, you know, I was listening to this W- the conversation that Raksha just gave us moved into deployment- Mm-hmm

[00:24:18] Peter: moved into delight, for the customer- Mm-hmm.. Moved into customization for the customer post-delight, and then moved into QA. And if we just, we think about that from bullets, uh, what y- you just heard is actually what modern marketing is today.

[00:24:35] Catherine: Yes.

[00:24:36] Peter: Raksha leads go-to-market motions. She leads strategy in many parts of our company.

[00:24:42] Peter: but what you just heard was one of our teammates talking about a part of the business of how it all connects together. And, and I'm, I'm pausing this, and I'm bringing this up 'cause this, you guys, this is so important for marketing organizations to understand and do. What I just heard right there is the future of marketing.

[00:24:59] Peter: What I just heard was how we are all sitting at the table, not every day, not in every meeting, but this is what you need for success, this type of roll up your sleeves and understanding what the cu- ultimately, understanding what the customer wants.

[00:25:13] Scott: And i- and in this case, it's the customer is one of the leaders.

[00:25:16] Scott: Sorry about that. Go ahead, Captain.

[00:25:18] Catherine: No, we were saying the same thing. It's internal and external customers, Scott, right?

[00:25:22] Scott: Yeah. Yeah. So you're eating your own dog food, and you're, you're learning from the approach, not j- not just from, uh, your own customers but also your internal customers.

[00:25:32] Peter: I- I was just gonna say, there is probably, cohorts who would hear this talk track and nod their heads vigorously like I think the four of us are doing, and others who are saying, "I- I'm not exactly sure about that."

[00:25:47] Peter: And my, my thesis is that you need to be nodding your head vigorously about this methodology and, most importantly, this mentality. This is how you win. You've gotta be extensible. You gotta be flexible. You gotta own every corner of what we're trying to do. You gotta always do it from the customer point of view, internal, external.

[00:26:03] Peter: All of this is actually an accumulation of new skill sets. You ask me what's different about the playbook from 20 years ago? This is different right now.

[00:26:12] Catherine: Yes. This type of dynamic element.

[00:26:14] Peter: This

[00:26:14] Peter: is the agile nature that marketers should have always had.

[00:26:17] Catherine: And what I heard Raksha say, too, that I loved is she naturally tied it into what many of us would've previously seen as product marketing, and what I think the next generation of marketers- Mm

[00:26:27] Catherine: is seeing is you don't get to be T-shaped anymore. You really have to know everything, and you use that deep granularity coming in from experts but also a lot on AI. But to truly own your scope, you really have to understand all aspects of marketing, and you really gotta be able to be agile because we just don't live in the same world that we used to.

[00:26:50] Catherine: Which leads me into this next question I really wanted to ask both of you, which is, you know, we talked about delight, and we talked about adoption How can you help us hone the instinct that something needs a second closer look before someone spots a problem or before your customer, internal or external, says, "Hey, this is something we need to go deeper with."

[00:27:14] Catherine: What's that instinct look like? How do you smell that something needs to be adjusted?

[00:27:18] **Peter:** And, uh, Catherine, are you thinking about from the perspective of a marketer looking at a deployed solution, or more from our own internal house-

[00:27:27] **Scott:** I think internal. Mm-hmm. I think we were talking, yeah, we're talking internal.

[00:27:30] **Scott:** We, we talked about research- Yeah.. And sales enablement.

[00:27:33] **Raksha:** So, uh, yeah. I like to call it, and it's not a new term, it's growth hacking, right? I mean, you go to a- Yeah.. Product-led growth company, what do you have, right? You have a bunch of growth hackers in the background really understanding where people are dropping off, understanding if adoption is actually occurring.

[00:27:53] **Raksha:** And that's even more prevalent, for any internal solution that, that we launch, is understanding if it's being adopted and understanding that early, right? Not months later after you've deployed a solution. It's really tracking it from launch to the next week, the week after that, the week after that, and understanding what..

[00:28:18] **Raksha:** Understanding your customer. I mean, go, I'm going, I'm gonna go back to that point, right? Yeah. If you're seeing, if I'm, if I see a salesperson, right, not using this account research agent that I spent, you know, three months building, right? Now we can shorten that time, but my first instinct will be to go to them and ask them, "Why aren't you using it?"

[00:28:39] **Raksha:** Is it you not knowing that this exists? Is it not helpful to you? What information is missing from this automated gener- ju- ju- automatically generated report," right? And, understanding it that way. That's, that's where my head goes. It's all about growth hacking. It's understanding where people are dropping off- Yeah

[00:29:01] **Raksha:** having that analytics to support your theory, and getting on it quick, right?

[00:29:06] **Scott:** Yeah. What I think what I'm hearing is, is, uh, definitely do versioning, but at some point you gotta release the hounds to get that insight on, okay, is this actually delighting that, uh, that, uh, that customer. And, you know, that, uh, and that sounds like a definite signal, like don't keep on iterating and don't give it into the hands of the actual user.

[00:29:28] **Scott:** Would you, would you agree, Peter?

[00:29:30] **Peter:** Yes. Although I don't know if I g- agree with the don't give in to the hands of the individual user, uh, because I, I think the-- I think there's a, a flexibility and extensibility, to use that word again, that we wanna all be thoughtful of right now. I think, um, you know, it goes back to that concept that I had that an intern can teach me a lot.

[00:29:51] **Peter:** it's a really neat moment in time, Scott, of where, someone can come to me and say, "Hey, you're doing it wrong," or, "Hey, I have a different idea," and provide not just, uh, their emotional feeling that they think it's something wrong, but now provide evidence of it. And we have a whole suite of tools that we use every day, that we build ourselves, and Raksha just referred to something she built with our own homegrown tools.

[00:30:19] **Peter:** We use, of course, all of the modern, LLMs. We are on Claude. We, uh, tap into Gemini, uh, and, and OpenAI, et cetera, et cetera. Um There are many people in my department who will toggle between that, Scott, every hour of the day. I will have somebody in a single 30-minute meeting be hopping between Claude, um, our AI for work tool, Genspark, back to the CRM on HubSpot.

[00:30:46] **Peter:** This is all a workflow. And we all talk about agents or manage- AI managers that we have working for us. All of us should now have at least several. This morning I had somebody who was on an airplane use my PR release, uh, tool, my PI- my PR writer, and wrote a press release simply using that in, you know, as we know, 90 seconds because I spent maybe three weeks of iterations honing it down to what I wanted us to do going forward.

[00:31:20] **Peter:** Think about the acceleration that's happening with that. Now, what they will do is come back to me and say, "Hey, here's where I think it collapsed. Here's where I think it fell down." we have probably, I don't know, somewhere, but across my team, I bet we have more than 20 different tools and manager types that are AI created, both from what is Kore.ai built and what is, you know, more, con- conventional.

[00:31:46] **Peter:** and no-- And where I'm going with that i- is I, keep coming back to this theme of what's so different that we're all talking about here, and how do we put our own harness around that? How, how do we turn that into o- operations? Um, anyway, I'll, I'll pause there 'cause it, it's just a lot to think about, a lot to process- Yeah

[00:32:03] **Peter:** and where we go next with it all.

[00:32:05] Scott: Yeah, I, I wa- I was gonna say that, um, Peter, you, you, you have just been named the Hot Topics Global B2B CMO 100. That's a nice n- for 2026, that's a nice mouthful, but I'm gonna put you in the hot seat. You know, what would you say is the step-by-step, uh, addressing that challenge of the guardrails, addressing the challenge of, uh, still getting it out there, uh, and iterating and making it better?

[00:32:32] Peter: Yeah, it, it's-- Uh, let me, you know, kind of answer it from, From a behavioral standpoint, it, this is really important. From an internal standpoint, uh, a situation is that the market has changed tremendously. We as marketers have got to respond to that or we're dead in the water. Many of my peers, uh, are..

[00:32:53] Peter: know that their company is already dead in the water. I feel that we at Kore made a very important but difficult change, evolution, and every company has got to throw- go through it and feel some pain, or you're outdated. This is internal, so the action is how do you take the steps to make the right evolution?

[00:33:13] Peter: And it's not a pivot, it's an evolution of what you do the next step. I think about empowerment. I think about I have to reimagine my own agility, what I need to do as a leader. Tactically, Scott, gosh, um, I don't know about you, but I keep a program tracker of what are the top priorities, and I looked at it last night.

[00:33:33] Peter: It's eight pages long. For most of my career, it's been three pages, and I, I kinda tapped it. I would stop it at three pages. So it's not that I am suddenly overwhelmed. It's suddenly that all this new opportunity is hitting me, and we all have got to accept that. We have to move at a faster speed. We have to trust the people around us.

[00:33:51] Peter: That, that's the internal stuff. On the external side, I think a lot of the same rules apply, that we have, like as Raksha said, we have to rethink how we're using data. We have to rethink about what we're telling the Future buyer or the current buyer if it's logo expansion, a lot of our businesses are.

[00:34:10] Peter: and we have to come to them because of the customization and the heightened expectations they have, that they think and they know, they believe, that they can get more from us. The results of all this, you know, where, where we are at the end, is I have a department where, I have a privilege that I get to be one of the owners of our AI tools.

[00:34:29] Peter: I, I own the AI governance inside our whole company, which is incredibly daunting because we are an AI company. A- and they're like, "Seriously? We have the CMO running this thing?" But you know what? My, my superpower is connecting the dots and connecting people across teams. The result is that we're moving faster.

[00:34:45] Peter: The result is that we're g- letting other voices come up and tell us how to do things. Our data is getting much smarter, literally by the month. It's getting cleaner, smarter, uh, to the point where a seller on the other side of the world can have a meeting right now, and he is gonna reference something that a CEO might have said on the other side of the world.

[00:35:07] Peter: He will reference that to a vice president, and that, uh, the CEO may have said it only 12 hours earlier. We're doing all of that automatically. Think about the real-time-ness. These results, ultimately, I believe, make companies like ours who are thinking this way pull further and further ahead in confidence, in that delight.

[00:35:25] Peter: A- and, uh, that's a pathway for success.

[00:35:28] Catherine: Absolutely. What I hear from you, Peter, and from you too, Raksha, is really, like, there are three main things that I would take away from today's conversation: setting those guardrails, creating trust and having trust that people can do what needs to be done, and then being agile.

[00:35:45] Catherine: And it, it sounds like that's really what we're looking for in this new kind of modern marketer. So maybe a, a final question for you, Peter, and then, Raksha, I'm sure we'd love to get your input on this too. And, you know, what's, what's something that maybe in the past as a CMO people have been expected to accept as normal, and you think in this new world might be bad advice?

[00:36:10] Peter: It's a really good question. I think, uh.. Ah. I think a CMO today needs to be an operator. I think a CMO needs to roll up their sleeves and be able to look at the AEO results, and I think needs to have commentary on what slide 12 looks like, and needs to- Mm-hmm.. Sit down with Raksha and say, "Let's open up the CRM, and I want to see what is happening inside there."

[00:36:42] Peter: Uh, many of us have the opportunity as we advance in our career to get a little bit of distance, and that becomes incredibly important because you have to be externally facing. My peers, and myself sometimes, are fortunate enough to stand on a stage, fortunate enough to put a fo- strong focus on LinkedIn and getting the voice, the heart, the drumbeat of the company out there.

[00:37:05] **Peter:** All of this is essential, you guys. So this is not me saying you need to be an operator instead. It's saying you need to also be an operator. And for many of us, it's a little bit going back to where we were when we were senior directors and executive directors, right? This is imperative.

[00:37:21] **Scott:** Peter,

[00:37:21] **Scott:** I totally, I totally agree with you.

[00:37:23] **Scott:** I totally agree. You have to get back to being hands-on and getting in Uh, or else it'll it'll escape you. You'll lose it, right?

[00:37:31] **Peter:** It, it, I'm guessing you kind of enjoy it, right?

[00:37:35] **Scott:** I do. I personally do, but, you know, that's how you keep, uh, that's how you keep up, right, Peter? If not, you're gonna be lagged.

[00:37:42] **Scott:** I, I might, also add, you know, we're fortunate that we don't just have the CMO, but we have a trusted operator. So, uh, Raksha, I, think it's always interesting 'cause you don't really get this dynamic. What do you wish every CMO understood about that person sitting next to them?

[00:38:00] **Raksha:** Oh, that's a good question.

[00:38:02] **Raksha:** I, you know, I think I'm pretty fortunate that, Peter and I have a very good working relationship, and I think there's a lot of trust there, right? When I say trust, I mean trust me with the data. Trust me that I will provide you the right insights, right? And I'll give you an example.

[00:38:23] **Raksha:** We have this living the data weekly call, me and him and a bunch of other people on our team. And I can show numbers all day every day, right? This conversion rate is low. Okay, we're doing really well hitting our MQL number this, this month. But digging a little deeper and understanding the why behind something happening is j- actually more important in my opinion than the number itself.

[00:38:54] **Raksha:** Yep. And the reason why I say that is because it empowers him to make data-based decisions on whether he needs to pivot from putting a little bit more budget into this one initiative that hasn't been working out because of X, Y, Z reason and it'll take X amount of time to fix it, and actually fund this other initiative that is producing the results that he's expecting.

[00:39:23] **Raksha:** So- I think every CMO really needs to trust their operator, and they need to empower their operator to bring the insights to them the way they see it. 'Cause ultimately, I'm.. Wh- what am I doing, right? I'm giving you the insights so you can, you can make the best decisions for the company so we can operate better, because it would make me so happy to see those numbers be where we want them to be.

[00:39:51] **Catherine:** Well said. That, that, that's so well said, and I think it's, it's so reflective of the time and where we're at, that there just has to be this trust and this interaction, and the two of you have been so great at being able to show us how that looks in real time. So thank you, Peter, thank you, Raksha. I think this was a beautiful example of how you can have this wonderful dynamic and really make your go-to-market motion so much the stronger, because you have that interplay between the data and feet on the street and what's happening, and a CMO who truly cares and is coming down and having those conversations at the same level.

[00:40:26] **Catherine:** So thank you so much for joining us. I think this was a, a wonderful example of, of what, what good looks like.

[00:40:32] **Peter:** Thank you. It's been great to be here.

[00:40:33] **Raksha:** Thank you.

[00:40:34] **Catherine:** The one thing I keep coming back to is the CMO has to go back to being an operator and leveraging AI tools to get the right insights. You can't be 10 steps away from production.

[00:40:45] **Catherine:** You've truly gotta understand everything, soup to nuts.

[00:40:48] **Scott:** I really enjoyed Raksha's perspective. Uh, so mine is more on building out and versioning the AI work streams, and more importantly, focusing on getting them quickly into the hands of the users so you can get rapid enhancement.

[00:41:02] **Catherine:** I love that. Peter and Raksha, thank you for your direct take on the modern go-to-market flywheel.

[00:41:07] **Scott:** And don't forget, today's episode continues on Reddit, [r/hdinsights/cmocatalystlab](#). Drop your thoughts with others on this topic.

[00:41:17] **Catherine:** And if this one hit, send it to a peer and subscribe. We'll be back in two weeks.